

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 311.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1869.

PRICE 1½d.

## A POPULAR TOPIC.

THE oldest subject of conversation, and the one whose popularity shows the least signs of decay, is without doubt the Weather. In early times, there must have been scarcely anything else to talk about, and the importance of it to those who lived by agriculture only must also have been intrinsically much greater. During the period of the Deluge, the topic must have been paramount, even more so than we find it now during that uncomfortable quarter of an hour before dinner. Besides its general acceptance as a medium of conversational introduction, the weather in these times has also its special ministers—meteorological fanatics, who idolise it, and pay it scientific worship, not with incense and organ music, but with barometers and wind-gauges. These erect altars upon mountain-tops and other out-of-the-way places, to calculate the rainfall, and keep collections of instruments sacred to this Culture in their back-gardens. While other folks are content to rub their hands, and say: 'Cold, to-night,' these will tell you to a fraction how *their* thermometer has sunk, and what was its behaviour on the same date for the last ten years. I suppose there are hundreds of these devotees in the suburbs of London, whose waking thought is where the wind is, and whose last act before retiring to rest has been to look at the Bulb.

A full score of them are regular contributors to the *Times* newspaper, which, to meet the taste of this considerable sect, has of late years established a Meteorological Department. By means of this, the intelligence is communicated that the wind at Aberdeen is blowing from the north-east, which is at least so far interesting as being quite in harmony with human experience; and that the waves at Brighton are 3. Of course, there are more than three, but that is the figure by which a certain height of wave and roughness of sea are indicated. To discover this, with other enthralling phenomena, is quite an intellectual feat, from the abstruse abbreviations employed, and produces the same excitement as a

perusal of *Bradshaw's Guide*, or the formation of a Chinese puzzle. In to-day's *Times*, for instance, there are twenty-one English, and eleven continental towns, from which these data have been collected, and a dainty feast is thereby spread for these weather epicures. The *pièce de résistance* is the force of the wind (which will stand a good deal of chopping); but there are many delicate side-dishes. '20·03 r,' for example, a slice from the under-cut of the barometer, is enough to make your mouth water; *c b*, though a garnished dish, is not the mere title of honour with which we are all acquainted, but means a beautiful blue sky with clouds detached; *p q* is a *souchet* of showers and squalls; *r*, a *purée*, all rain. Some cruelty (as in *paté de foie gras*, and other delicacies) appears to be practised in order to pamper the appetite. *T* means that the thermometer (which, like the salamander, delights in heat) is 'exposed in shade,' and it is served both Dry and Wet; while the barometer, which is wont to be somewhat intractable, is 'corrected and reduced' before it comes to table. There is no society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Scientific Instruments, at present; but the way in which the mercury is treated might come under the head of vivisection. This is too painful (as well as unintelligible) a subject for us to dilate upon, but *f* and *s* are the mysterious letters used in connection with it. The repast does not conclude with ice-pudding, but with *s* (again), for snow.

There is also an Afternoon Weather Report of a lighter character, which seems to be identical with Kettledrum. Yarmouth is considered an extra (just as a bloater, served immediately before the wine, is not in the *menu*), but has a report in very small type all to itself; and there seems to be always 'pressure' at this neglected spot. Large districts, however, are sometimes also very cavalierly treated. 'The lowest readings are in the south-east of England,' for instance. Is it possible that even our Penny Readings are underbid in that locality? The following statement seems to be a contradiction in terms: 'Pressure has risen somewhat, and storms in Ireland have subsided.'

The above are all quotations from the ordinary reports, but these by no means satisfy the more advanced of the devotees of the weather. These write long letters dated from 'the Observatory, Tooting,' or from 'Aneroid Cottage, Camberwell,' calling the attention of the public to the most delicate vicissitudes of their scientific instruments; or now and then announcing some astounding behaviour of the same, which, it seems, is an omen of the direst significance. These last predict, with a confidence beyond that of Dr Cumming, the most alarming catastrophes, and that without giving themselves a sufficient interim to gain any reputation as prophets in their own country, much more in any other. The day of doom occurs, and nothing comes of it, before their warning has time to circulate; and we don't hear from Aneroid Cottage for the next twelve months. The Weather-sage of Tooting, however, takes care to make it known that his brother-philosopher has made a fool of himself, and publishes a tabulated statement of his own observations, which had led him to expect, with the calmness of certainty, the exact sort of weather which took place on the day in question. He then takes the opportunity of reminding us that 'yesterday was unusually' hot or cold, as the case may have been, and gives us a Selection from the readings of his thermometer for the last two-and-forty years. Also, happening of late 'to glance over the Temperature Table of the Royal Society, extending from 1794 to 1849,' he extracts for the public benefit the maximum heat recorded in London for the current month throughout that period.

These are the high-priests of the thermometer, the very ministers of the temple (of the winds); but there are also many amateur meteorological fanatics, to whom (especially in the long vacation) the editor of the *Times* is very complaisant. These are always on the watch for comets and shooting-stars, and probably only sleep in the daytime. 'SIR—It may be interesting to many of your readers to learn that while driving with my wife last evening from Diss in Norfolk towards Norwich, in a gig, we both perceived what had every appearance of a ball of fire descend in the western quarter of the heavens. It was also noticed by many persons to whom we mentioned the occurrence; and you will doubtless receive a report of it from more able sources; but if this should not be the case, the above is entirely at your service. I enclose my card (in accordance with your regulations) as a guarantee of good faith, and remain your obedient servant,

A HUMBLE OBSERVER OF NATURE.'

Again: 'SIR—I have the pleasure to inform you, that from nine till midnight on the 2d instant there was brilliant aurora borealis.—Yours obediently,

A LOOKER-ON.'

These enthusiasts are all perfectly harmless; and it would be the height of cruelty to debar them from these simple utterances. But they are not affected by the moon alone, like other lunatics, but by every vicissitude of the weather—cold as well as heat forces them into activity; and even 'an unprecedented continuance of calm' will cause them to rush into small type.

But, after all, the weather has a great attraction for us all, and particularly when the occurrence of anything monstrous and abnormal is promised to us by its priests and ministers. For weeks, Mr Saxby,

who predicted the great tidal wave, was a public benefactor; and more than one newspaper is probably indebted to his prophecy for its having survived the last Long Vacation. None of your namby-pamby dabbles in Weather matters, this man of science stood by his Wave to the very last; the railway companies sent excursion-trains to see it; the lodging-house keepers exhibited their prudence in providing for its reception; the comic journals made pictorial material of it for weeks; and, after all, it did no harm to any of us. In America, of course, the Tidal Wave rose to a colossal height, and submerging a cultivated area of about the size of Yorkshire, did a great deal of damage. There is a certain chivalry of imagination among that great people which causes them to embrace with enthusiasm all sublime ideas; while the immense extent and remoteness of their territory even enables the Portent to come to pass without much difficulty or fear of investigation. In England, from the crowded state of the population, anything satisfactory in the way of phenomena is exceedingly rare.

A good strong sensational work, such as *The Meteorological Prophet, or Weather or No*, would, however, be received with rapture in this country, since even the twaddle of old Moore and Zadkiel has great acceptance. In the meantime, we gladly welcome a sober, sensible little volume called *Weather Lore*,\* a collection of Proverbs, Sayings, and Rules concerning the Weather, compiled with much carefulness and judgment. They are culled, of course, from very various sources—from the Bible, from Shakspeare, from the Shepherd of Banbury, who, in the last century, wrote a list of outdoor signs of atmospheric change. The New Testament, indeed, contains some excellent weather lore; and in one instance, Christ himself has not thought it unworthy of Him to confirm a popular adage about a cloud rising in the west and producing rain, for after mentioning the saying, he has added, 'and so it is.' The writings of Job are also very rich in allusions to the winds, clouds, and tempests. In one case, however, Solomon flatly contradicts him. 'Fair weather cometh out of the north,' says Job xxxvii. 22. 'The north wind bringeth forth rain,' says Proverbs xxv. 23, Sharpe's Translation. So that, we see, folks began to differ about the weather at a very early period, just as they do now.

Well, Duncombe, how will be the weather?

Sir, it looks cloudy altogether;  
And coming across our Houghton Green,  
I stopped and talked with old Frank Beane;  
While we stood there, sir, old Jan Swain  
Went by, and said he knowed 'twould rain.

The next as came was Master Hunt,  
And he said surely: 'No, it wun't'.  
And then I met with Farmer Blow,  
He plainly said he didn't know.  
So, sir, when doctors disagree,  
Who's to decide it—you or me?

Again, it is generally understood that we have quite as much damp in England as is good for us; and there are many proverbs to that effect—as: 'A dry summer never made a dear peck'; and,

Whoso hath but a mouth,  
Will ne'er in England suffer drouth.

\* *Weather Lore*. By R. Inwards, Fellow of the British Meteorological Society. Tweedie: Strand.

Yet there are also proverbs which assert the direct contrary, as :

After a famine in the stall (that is, bad hay-crop),  
Comes a famine in the hall (that is, bad corn-crop) ;

And, 'A famine in England begins in the horse-manger.'

French, Scotch, and English, however, agree in many particulars, and notably with reference to Candlemas-day and the early part of February. 'It seems that, according to the notions of our ancestors, this part of the year could not be too cold ; and no statistical evidence will ever make our farmers believe that a warm Christmas bodes well for an English harvest.' They also imagine it to be unhealthy : 'A green winter makes a fat churchyard ;' to which assertion the doctors and the Registrar-general very strenuously oppose themselves. It is universally allowed, however, in Europe at least (for Egypt delights in an overflow), that flood is a great evil ; and 'Under water, dearth ; under snow, bread,' is a saying that is echoed even in Italy. It is generally held, too, that the year's crop will depend upon what weather we get in the first two months of it.

January or February  
Do fill or empty the granary,

is a French proverb ; and 'January commits the fault,' say we, with also a wise application to human affairs, 'and May bears the blame.'

The weather that is most popular is, upon the whole, what is considered 'seasonable,' no matter how disagreeable ; as, 'A dry and cold March never begs its bread ;' 'A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom ;' and,

A March without water  
Dowers the hind's daughter.

Here is a wise precept for those who are in a hurry to exhibit themselves in the summer fashion :

Till May be out,  
Leave not off a clout.

And, indeed, it is evident from many an old saw concerning this month, that it never was a warm one in England, or to be held as summer, in spite of all that the poets would have us believe on that point.

May ; come she early or come she late,  
She'll make the cow to quake ;

And again :

Shear your sheep in May,  
And shear them all away.

Our author mentions as one feature of interest in these old sayings, that they 'give evidence of the slowly changing climate of this country ;' but we do not see any proof of this in the examples quoted, and he has many a brother-meteorologist who will deny that it is changing at all. Weather-wise folks have always entertained fancies of this sort. Lord Bacon states that it is an old opinion that the weather changes repeat themselves after forty years ; but there is no scientific condonation of that idea whatever. Most people believe that a change of moon brings about a change of weather.

A certain honest high-sheriff, finding himself shut up in his own coach with the late Justice M., whose reputation as a 'rough customer,' though a

keen wit, had preceded him on the circuit, was rather at a loss for conversation ; there was another judge, of course, in the vehicle ; but he was a silent man, and so the poor sheriff was left to his own resources.

'My lord,' said he at last, 'the moon has changed, and so I hope that we shall have fine weather.'

'Are you then such a fool, sir,' growled great M., 'to believe that the moon has anything to do with it ?'

Here the silent judge, who was a courtly man, interposed with : 'Really, Brother M., I think you are very hard upon our friend Mr High-Sheriff. I confess that I, for my part, believe that the moon has a very considerable influence on the state of the weather.'

'Then, all I can say is, brother,' rejoined great M., 'that you are as great a fool as the sheriff.'

The author of the present useful volume takes the same view as the crusty judge. 'One frequently hears,' says he, 'of the weather altering at the change of moon ; but careful observers have been unable to detect any real differences in the state of the air at such times.' The sun, indeed, is a better prophet ; but then his predictions only refer to the coming few hours. 'When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red ; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering,' Matt. xvi. And this is corroborated by many a popular saw :

Sky red at night is the sailor's delight ;  
Sky red in the morning is the sailor's warning.

Most weather beliefs, however, notwithstanding that they may be both ancient and far diffused, are illusive and unfounded. There is a nautical proverb which arises from a supposed clearance of clouds which takes place when the full moon rises : 'The full moon eats clouds,' and there is also an Indian saying almost identical : 'The full moon grows fat on clouds.' Yet close observation has proved that there is no fact of the sort. Again : 'The west wind is a gentleman, and goes to bed' (that is, drops in the evening), says the proverb ; but Cornish-men know better. It 'drops on' to their ships, and behaves in a manner anything but gentlemanlike. Weather proverbs are, in fact, as a general rule, only to be trusted when they are quite local ; they are almost all empirical, and founded on insufficient data ; and it is only on a limited area that anything like certainty can be attained. Thus : 'The glare of the distant Ayrshire ironworks being seen at night from Cumbræ or Rothesay, rain is expected next day ;' and again :

When Largo Law puts on his hat,  
Let Kellie Law beware of that ;  
When Kellie Law gets on his cap,  
Largo Law may laugh at that :

which, when we are informed that Largo is to the south-west of Kellie, we may easily understand and credit.

The fact is, however humiliating it may be to own it, that many kinds of birds and insects know a deal more about the weather than we do ; and indeed, 'since it is of much more importance to them, it would be wonderful if nature had not provided them with a keener prophetic instinct in this respect.' Utter destruction would occur, for instance, to the nests of some birds if

the tenants were absent during a gale of wind, or a pelting shower; while *our* houses, even though 'run up' by the most enterprising of building speculators, will stand little shocks of that sort. To insects, again, 'the state of the weather for the fraction of a week may determine the duration of their span of life.'

'When the fieldfare, starling, swan, and other birds of passage arrive soon from the north, it predicts an early and severe winter.' This is really important, if true; whereas, unfortunately, these winged prophets can in general see but a very little way into futurity, however clearly.

'When sea-birds fly out early and far to seaward, moderate winds and fair weather may be expected; and when they hang about the coast or fly inland, we may look for rough weather.'

Similarly: 'If rooks stay at home, or return in the middle of the day, it will rain; if they go far ahead, it will be fine.'

'The drumming of the snipe in the air, and the call of the partridge, indicate dry weather and frost at night to the shepherds of the Garrow.'

Finally: 'A bee was never caught in a shower.'

The vegetable world has its not untrustworthy prophets; and especially the pink-eyed pimpernel (or ploughman's weather-glass), which so certainly closes before rain, that it is more credited, by those who know it, than any instrument. It is mentioned among the other natural signs in Dr Jenner's celebrated *Rain Forecast*:

The hollow winds begin to blow,  
The clouds look black, the glass is low.  
The soot falls down, the spaniels sleep,  
And spiders from their cobwebs creep.  
Last night the sun went pale to bed,  
The moon in halves hid her head;  
The boding shepherd heaves a sigh,  
For, see! a rainbow spans the sky;  
The walls are damp, the ditches smell,  
Closed is the pink-eyed pimpernel;  
Hark how the chairs and tables crack!  
Old Betty's joints are on the rack;  
Loud quack the ducks, the peacocks cry;  
The distant hills are looking nigh;  
How restless are the snorting swine;  
The busy flies disturb the kine;  
Low o'er the grass the swallow wings;  
The cricket, too, how sharp he sings;  
Puss on the hearth, with velvet paws,  
Sits wiping o'er her whiskered jaws;  
Through the clear stream the fishes rise,  
And nimbly catch th' incautious flies;  
The glow-worms, numerous and bright,  
Illumed the dewy dell last night;  
At dusk the squalid toad was seen  
Hopping and crawling o'er the green;  
The whirling dust the wind obeys,  
And in the rapid eddy plays;  
The frog has changed his yellow vest,  
And in a russet coat is dressed;  
Though June, the air is cold and still;  
The yellow blackbird's voice is shrill;  
My dog, so altered in his taste,  
Quits mutton-bones on grass to feast;  
And, see you rooks, how odd their flight—  
They imitate the gliding kite,  
And seem precipitate to fall,  
As if they felt the piercing ball.  
'Twill surely rain—I see with sorrow  
Our jaunt must be put off to-morrow.

Dr Jenner's *Forecast* has truth as well as rhyme to recommend it; but, after all, what a small thing

it is to predict, even with certainty, that it will presently rain, and much beyond that no meteorologist has yet got. All atmospheric predictions are still but gropings in the dark, as even our weather-wise author frankly confesses.

'The most learned Meteorologist, armed with the thousand delicate contrivances of modern science, is not more able to predict the weather for a week to come, than were the ignorant shepherds, who, in ages past, watched the spreading and drifting of the clouds from Chiltern or Cheviot top, while science was still in its cradle, and meteorology a thing unknown.'

#### FIELD-GARDENS FOR LABOURERS.

It is now twenty-six years since the subject of allotting small portions of land to the independent poor for cultivation upon their own account—in cases where no gardens were attached to their cottages—came before the country, in the Report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons. That committee reported strongly in favour of the system; but in the interval which has elapsed since the publication of their Report, the subject has been suffered to remain in abeyance. It is, however, one of the greatest importance to the labouring poor; and it will certainly be difficult for us to enable persons who have not read the vast body of evidence which Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the subject have succeeded in collecting, to realise the almost vital interest which it possesses for a large section of the agricultural poor.

In the early years of the present century, the experiment of allotting small portions of land to cottagers was extensively tried by the Earl of Winchelsea; and his lordship reported, as the result of his experience, that the labourers and their families were both vastly benefited thereby. They lived better, from the income which the produce of their little patch of land brought them, and also from the vegetables, &c., which they were able to rear in their gardens for their own consumption. They likewise became contented with their situation, and attached to it, and feeling the advantage of possessing a little money, their industry was thereby stimulated.

In the year 1830-31, Captain Scobell—the labour of whose life has been devoted to advocating the advantages of the allotment system to the poor, and who, from his self-denying labours in the cause, may fairly be termed the apostle of the movement—introduced allotments into the parishes of High Littleton and Midsomer Norton in Somersetshire. He carried the system into effect in these two parishes upon a large scale, and with great success, and from them it has spread into fifty adjoining ones.

Several acts of parliament have been passed in favour of allotments; but still they are not nearly so extensively adopted in this country, as the benefits which they confer upon the labouring poor would lead us to desire. By the provisions of these acts of parliament, the churchwardens of



a parish are empowered, with the consent of the inhabitants in vestry assembled, to purchase or take on lease, on account of the parish, any suitable portion of land not exceeding fifty acres, and let any portion of such land 'to any poor and industrious inhabitant of the parish,' to be occupied and cultivated upon his own account, and for his own benefit, 'at such reasonable rent, and for such term' as might be fixed by the vestry.

As public attention has been little called to the subject since the inquiry by the parliamentary committee of 1843, we shall now state briefly the arrangements and regulations under which the allotment system is, according to the Report of that committee, most advantageously carried out. Firstly, as it is desirable that the profits of an allotment should be viewed by its holder rather as an aid to, than a substitute for, his ordinary income accruing from wages, the allotment should be of no greater extent than can be cultivated during the leisure moments of the labourer and his family. The exact size which will meet this condition must necessarily vary according to the nature of the soil, the number of his family, &c., but one quarter of an acre is the size usually adopted, and the one found to be best suited to average cases. Secondly, the allotment should be near to the dwelling of its occupier, because much of the benefit depends upon the man and his wife and children being able to devote spare moments to the care of their ground. Thirdly, though the land will yield larger profits under this mode of cultivation than under the usual method of tillage, the proprietor who wishes to benefit the poor man should not exact more rent than he would expect to receive if he let it out to be farmed in the ordinary way. Fourthly, tithes, parochial rates, taxes, and all other charges should be included in the rent, and be paid, not by the occupier, but by the owner.

The net annual profit of a quarter of an acre allotment has been found to be, for poor land L.4, and for good land L.5. The most profitable, as well as the most beneficial employment of the land is by growing vegetables upon it. 'I have known children,' said one witness to the parliamentary committee appointed to inquire into the subject of allotments, 'of ten and eleven years of age announce that they had tasted vegetables since they had these grounds, which they never saw on their father's table before; they go almost daily to fetch something for the dinner.' Nor is the benefit to the agricultural labourer of allotments to be measured only by the profit which he is able to make out of the sale of their produce; for, in the words of another witness, Sir Henry Fletcher, 'the good of them is seen not only in the money they put into the pocket of the labourer, but in the money they keep there, by inducing him to go and work at his allotment, instead of sitting drinking in the public-house.'

Some readers may be inclined to urge that any direct pecuniary advantage to the labouring man

from his allotment would be neutralised by its value being taken into account in the rate of wages offered to him; but it was clearly proved by the evidence taken before the committee of 1843, that the allotments had had no effect upon wages, and that they had, in fact, been a clear addition to the labourer's resources. If this were the case in 1843, then assuredly it is much more so now, when there is a far greater demand for agricultural labour than there then was. One objection to allotments was formerly often urged by landlords—namely, that there would be great difficulty in collecting their rents from so many small tenants, and that they would have to suffer much loss from arrears. The evidence, however, which was taken before the commission of 1843, shews 'that the great desire felt by labourers to possess this means of adding to their income made them careful not to lose it.' One witness testified that 'during twelve years he had not lost a quarter per cent.' Another witness 'never had a difficulty about a farthing of rent.' A third states that his tenants 'bring the money on the appointed day without being called upon;' and a fourth says 'he has not had a defaulter to the amount of a penny.' Farmers also were afraid at first that the men would work in the early morning hours at their allotments, and so exhaust their strength, but this has not been found to be the case. It appears, too, that the farmers themselves are indirectly benefited by the allotment system, for the labourers are frequently kept off the poor-rates by consuming the produce of their allotments, and, moreover, they become, as labourers, more steady, more skilful, and, it may be added, more 'stay-at-home.'

Captain Scobell, R.N., recommends any gentleman who may wish to adopt the allotment system upon his estate to proceed in the following way: 'Announce your intention of letting field-gardens in your parish. Exclude no labourer for previous bad character; he may be reclaimed. Do not include any pauper. Let no parish officer have anything to do with the arrangements. The quantity of land (which should be good and fresh) to be granted to each family should be from 20 to 50 poles, according to the size and strength, &c. of the family. Divide the fields in strips from top to bottom, abutting against the highway. The fields should be as near as possible, and of easy access. A copy of your rules should be given to each tenant. The rent should be precisely that which a farmer pays for similar land, and should be paid in one payment in the autumn: condition—not to dispossess your tenants except on conviction by law of some crime, or on account of some wilful breach of the regulations. The effect of this guarantee will astonish you, even in those who have previously borne the worst characters. For the first year or two, contract, if you can, for some one to cart the manure provided by the tenants at the lowest possible price, making them pay by the measure of their field-garden, and not by the load. Cause an account to be kept of the quantity found by each; you will find it to be ample to uphold good or even fair land. Have no fear of the trouble; it will be but a light amusement.'

Not only are agricultural labourers deeply interested in the allotment question, but the working-men in many towns have shewn the greatest anxiety to avail themselves of similar allotments, whenever they have had an opportunity. From

the evidence taken by the parliamentary committee of 1843, it appears that there were then about 400 gardens held under the corporation of Nottingham. The 'Northern and Midland Counties Artisans' and Labourers' Friend Society' had at that date caused 853 acres to be let in allotments in the neighbourhood of large towns. Societies were formed, each member of which put by a penny a week to form a fund to meet the outlay upon first entering upon the land. A large portion of the evidence taken in the inquiry of 1843 is devoted to pointing out the benefit which artisans derive in regard to health, comfort, and rational recreation, as well as in additions to their pecuniary means, from the possession of small plots of garden-ground on the outskirts of towns.

One great reason for encouraging the allotment system is to be found in the gravity of the fact that, during the last century and a half—and especially during the last one hundred years—there has been going on throughout England a gradual alienation of the class of agricultural labourers from the soil they till. The extent to which waste lands have been enclosed under the Enclosure Acts has without doubt greatly tended to prevent the agricultural labourer from acquiring little portions of land which he could cultivate upon his own account. Now-a-days, there is, unfortunately, scarcely any method provided for him whereby he may hope to bridge over the gulf which separates him from the great farmer. Since the passing of the first Enclosure Act in the year 1710, there have been, up to the year 1867, 7,660,413 acres enclosed—that is, above one-third part of the grand total of 25,451,626 acres which were under cultivation in England and Wales in the year 1867. Of this total of 7,660,413 acres enclosed since the year 1710, only 334,974 acres were enclosed between the years 1710 and 1760, thereby leaving 7,325,439 acres as those enclosed in the last one hundred and seven years. This statement of the total number of acres enclosed shews how large a portion of land has been removed from out of the reach (so to speak) of the agricultural labourer, and from which he now can derive no benefit except as a day-labourer upon it. It cannot be doubted that the enclosure of waste land is beneficial to the country at large, but it is equally certain that in many instances—we might almost say in the majority of instances—the enclosure has deprived the cottager of the benefits which he enjoyed from the waste land, without his obtaining any compensation. It is true that if the cottager be the holder of a freehold cottage, and if, as such, he had enjoyed rights over the waste, or if such rights had accrued to him by an uninterrupted user of twenty years, then by the General Enclosure Act of the 8th and 9th Vict., c. 118, a portion of such enclosed lands would be allotted to him, but he is immediately subject to the strong temptation to sell it to the farmer who may own the neighbouring land. It must also not be forgotten that the peasant who thus disposes of his plot of land is disposing not only of his own property, but of that of his successors. The right to have a pig, for example, upon such common lands is for ever after extinguished; and this may prove, and in many instances does prove, a serious loss to the successor of the agricultural labourer who has thus rashly sold his birthright. Those who are best acquainted with this subject know well that the higher wage which

the agricultural labourer may have been able to earn upon a large farm (which has thus been enclosed) has not compensated him for what he has lost by the enclosure. It must not also be forgotten that higher wages are not a never-failing accompaniment of large farms, for many instances could be cited of large farms upon which the rate of wages paid was very low. No doubt, the enclosure of waste lands does afford to the capitalist a remunerative employment of his capital, to the agricultural labourer a wider market for his labour, and to the community at large an increased supply of food; but whenever such enclosure of waste lands takes place, care should be taken by the government officers to see that suitable gardens are annexed to the cottages of the commoners, and that a certain portion of the common should be allotted, wherever it is necessary, for the special purpose of providing the cottagers with fuel.

In the twenty-two years between 1845 and 1867, 484,893 acres of waste lands were enclosed in England and Wales. Of these 484,893 acres, the Enclosure Commissioners had power by act of parliament, in the case of 320,855 acres, to allot gardens to the labouring poor. Of these 320,855 acres, 259,136 acres were assigned to the lords of manors and other persons having titles to a portion of the land enclosed; 59,600 acres were declared by the assistant Enclosure Commissioners to be, for various reasons, ineligible for public allotments; and only two thousand one hundred and nineteen acres were actually assigned as public allotments for gardens to the labouring poor. When we remember that waste lands were originally granted to lords of the manor, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of those who held lands within the manor, the difference between the number of acres (259,136) allotted to lords of the manor and others, and the number of acres (2,119) allotted to the poor, becomes even more suggestive and startling. Mr Cowper, M.P., wisely said upon the second reading of the General Enclosure Bill of 1844: 'In former times, every cottage almost had some common rights from which the poor occupants derived much benefit: the privilege of feeding a cow, a pig, or a goose on the common was a great benefit to them; and it was unfortunate, when the system of enclosing commons first commenced, that a portion of the land was not set apart for the benefit of every cottager who enjoyed common rights, and his successors; but the course adopted had been to compensate the owner of the cottage to which the common rights belonged, forgetting the claims of the occupier by whom they were enjoyed.'

Considering the great advantages which, as we have already pointed out, these allotments are to the labouring poor, and considering also that something like three million acres of waste land yet remain to be enclosed in England and Wales, is it too much to hope that henceforth, in the case of every such enclosure, a portion of land shall be reserved to every cottage of the parish in which it takes place? Is it likewise too much to hope that the day is not far distant when every labourer in England may have a means of bettering his condition afforded to him by his being allowed an opportunity of cultivating an allotment or field-garden? Landowners who may wish to benefit agricultural labourers may rest assured that, by setting apart a small portion of their

estate for the purpose of its being divided into allotments, they are assisting the agricultural poor in the best possible way—namely, by helping them to help themselves.

### UNDER THE FIRS.

‘BETTER, decidedly,’ said our doctor. ‘You’ll be all right in a day or two.’

‘Thank goodness!’ said I.

‘I want a rubber of whist,’ said our doctor smiling, ‘so I shall put you to rights as soon as possible.—Down, *Hec!*—I say, Scribe,’ he continued, patting the head of his great dog, ‘I ought to apologise; and I would, if I had brought him up; but he slipped in unseen.’

‘By the way,’ said I, ‘how did you get that animal?’

‘Patient of mine—death-bed legacy—thereby hangs a tale.—But, my good sir, what are you scrabbling that note-book from under your pillow for?’

‘To take notes, to be sure,’ I said: ‘tales are scarce in the market.’

‘Didn’t I say that you were to stop all work for the present?’ was the severe apostrophe.

I fell back with a groan.

‘Stop a few days, and I’ll tell you all about it—that is, if you will condescend to get well first under my treatment.’

‘I’ll do my best,’ I said; and I really did; so that, a week after, my friend the doctor was sitting with me, ready to relate the promised tale, while I was all attention.

‘I had a patient down in Surrey some time since,’ he said, ‘with a complaint that regularly baffled me. He was a bailiff, or something of that sort, living entirely alone as to human society; but he had for companion that great white dog—now mine, you know. Well, I attended him for weeks; and then one day I said to him: “Now, frankly, it’s a regular robbery for me to keep on coming here when I can do you no good. The long and the short of it is, medicine won’t touch you—your mind’s diseased. You have something upon it. Now, what is it?”

‘The poor fellow was silent for a few minutes, and then rising upon his elbow, his pale, drawn face all wild and scared of aspect, he caught me by the arm, whispering: “How did you find it out?”

‘By your manner,” I replied; “and, depend upon it, you would be all the better if you relieved your brain of the stress.”

‘Master,” he said, with a wild look, “it’s that dog;” and he pointed to the great animal.

‘That dog?’

‘Yes, and something else. He knows it all, and I’m afraid of him; but, before I go, I’ll tell you all about it.”

‘He seemed to be struggling for some moments with a great emotion, and then fixing his eyes on mine, he began, pointing as he spoke towards the dog:

“I tried to kill him again and again, sir, but I couldn’t, and I’m sorry now that I ever tried, for he was always a good and a faithful beast.—Come here, *Hec!*,” and the great dog came up to the bed-side, and licked his master’s thin white hand. “I’d ask you to forgive me, *Hec!*, old fellow, but you are only a dog, and would not understand me; but though I’m a man, and

you’re but a dumb beast, I’d be glad to change places with you this moment.—You know, sir, when my wife went away, and she was supposed to have gone to her father and mother?”

‘I nodded.

“Well, sir, it was not my poor wife, but her sister, who had been staying with us, whom I saw into the train that morning, at Hindley Station; and it was directly I reached home that a tiny spark, that had been pricking and tingling in my heart for months past, suddenly burst out into a fierce flame—so fierce that I could not quench it—and I did a deed that no one ever suspected. I need not go into all that now, but I had had little suspicions for long enough—suspicions that I know now to have been false; while, when I returned that day, I fancied something more, and angrily accused her. I don’t even know now myself how it happened, more than that she retorted fiercely, and ran up-stairs, where I followed her; and then, more words passing, I struck her brutally with my fist—a cruel, cowardly blow—and with a loud cry, she pitched backwards from top to bottom of the stairs; and then, after the heavy dull crash with which she fell, all was quite silent, for I stood still listening, till old *Hector* there burst into a low, whimpering howl.

“Then, all trembling, I went down slowly to find her lying in the little passage, quite motionless, with the dog licking her face; while, when I drove him away and spoke to her, she did not answer. Then I went down upon one knee to alter her position, for she was lying, stunned as I thought, with one arm bent under her, and her head turned in a strange, awkward way. I trembled violently, for though I thought her only stunned, with possibly an arm broken, all the time there was a dull, horrible, black dread coming up like a cloud to cover my soul, though as yet I could not understand what it meant.

“I shuddered, though, as I moved her, for her head hung back horribly, while, when I fetched a chair-cushion to rest it upon, her neck seemed to give way too easily. But I saw the next moment that her arm was broken; and laying it in what I thought to be an easy position, I fetched water, and began to bathe her face and temples, stopping once to threaten the dog, who kept on howling in the kitchen.

“Being a bailiff, ours is a lonely place, and there was no one near, or I should have called in help; for, as time passed on, and she did not revive, the strange black feeling seemed to grow thicker and more dense, though I would not give way to it as yet. I tried salts, brandy, burned feathers, chafing her cold hands, every remedy that I could think of, persevering for quite an hour; when all at once the black cloud seemed to cover me, and I jumped up, trembling worse than ever, for I knew that she was dead—that I had murdered her!

“I’ve suffered since, sir, every torment and pang that can come from a man’s conscience—such stings as I could hardly have thought a human being could bear, and not go mad; but they have all been as nothing, compared to the horrible feeling that came over me when I first knew the dreadful truth. First knew it! I had known it all along, from the moment after I struck the blow; but there was something within me that kept beating it off till now, when it came upon me like blasting lightning.



"At first, it was a frightful feeling of remorse and sorrow, and I would have given my own life to have brought her back, as I threw myself down by her side, calling her by name, begging her to forgive me, and kissing the face that was fast growing colder and colder. Then came a sense of fear, and I shrank back, scarcely daring to be near her, and glad at last to lay my handkerchief over her face; while that soon changed to a cowardly feeling of dread—not of her, nor even of future punishment for my unthought-of deed, but for the present, and the time when it would be found out.

"For a few moments my head swam, and I nearly fell, while thoughts crowded into my head of the police, the handcuffs, the prison, the judge, and last of all, of the gallows. What could I do? How could I hide the deed? Could I not say that she had fallen from top to bottom of the stairs, and would not that have been sufficient? Quite, I thought; and putting on my hat, I was about to run off to the town for a doctor, when I recollected that it was more than two hours since she had fallen, and that she was growing cold; while as soon as the medical man began to question me, I knew that I should betray myself.

"I dared not go; I dared not stir from the house; I dared not stay; and in my dread I got the dog close to me, and struck him when he looked in my face and howled. At least a dozen times I went and looked at the body lying there, so horribly still, but, in its very silence, speaking to me in a tongue, ignorant man that I was, that I could readily comprehend. But now a profound feeling of selfishness had taken possession of me, and I was pondering as to how I should conceal the deed. I had been a great reader, living so much in a quiet retired part, and I tried to recall whether I had ever read of any man being in a similar position to my own, fixing at last upon Eugene Aram.

"Whenever the dread seemed greater than I could bear, I kept telling myself that I had never meant to do the deed; and having spirits in the house, I drank—drank deeply; but without producing the effect I wished.

"Towards evening, first one and then another person came to the cottage, and as I heard their steps I trembled; for it seemed to me that some one was coming to ask me the question: Where is your wife? But no: I faced them one by one—the baker, the woman who brought us yeast and milk, and a hawking gipsy.

"I saw you and your missus at the station this morning, sir," said the woman who left the yeast. "Is she goin' to stay away long?"

"Yes," I said; "for some time;" and my heart gave a great leap, as these words suggested to me that other people might have made the same mistake, and it would be generally supposed that she had left home on a visit.

"But about the body—what should I do with it? I tried to think what I should do; but now there came a fresh struggle—a new horror to contend with. Something was urging me; voices seemed whispering to me, guiding me to the place where I kept my guns, and then, trembling in every limb, I loaded one—two barrels, and sat down thinking for a while. It seemed the best thing I could do; but I rose to take one more look at her as she lay in the passage so cold and still. I laid down my gun, and crossed the room, but for a long time I

could not remove my handkerchief from her face, while, when I did, it was but for a moment, and I dropped it again shuddering. Then I seemed to have heard voices outside, and I ran out, and looked up and down the lane, and round the house, but I was alone; and once more I entered, closed the door, and took up my gun.

"But I dared not: I was a coward, and I feared to meet the future. I wanted to live on and repent; to try and make amends, if it were possible; and thus I waited hour after hour—hour after hour, always haunted by the dread of voices which seemed whispering round me. Twice I thought she called, and I started and answered trembling, going each time as far as the passage, to come back shaking like a leaf, after touching the hand, by this time cold as marble.

"I had put the gun back in its corner, merely keeping the ramrod in my hand, with which from time to time I struck the dog, to keep him quiet, for the poor beast would go to the room-door and howl dismally, till I forced him to lie at my feet; while now he seemed afraid of me, and I of him, for he kept looking in my face, and whining, and then looking towards the door; and had I not struck him, he would have kept by it, tearing to get it open.

"The dim light of evening came at last, with the dread growing more and more upon me as the darkness increased. I dared not light a candle—I don't know why; but I felt a sort of fear that I should see more than was really in the house, and besides, I should have had to go in the dark along the little passage to the kitchen, though I tried to persuade myself that it was on account of the dog, and a dread that he should get out of the room.

"And then came the night, windy and stormy, with the rain riding upon the gusts of wind, to be beaten against the window-panes. There was but little moon, and the clouds were heavy, and drove quickly along the sky; while, now, in the intervals of the gusts of wind, it seemed to me more and more that there was a voice calling me, as if from a great distance off, so that the sound came faintly upon my ear. I listened again and again, opening the door, and standing bareheaded in the rain; but I could hear nothing.

"Hours passed, and then I had made up my mind what to do. I locked the door of the room where I was sitting, went round to the back, so as not to pass through the passage, and locked the back-door. Then going back to the front-room, I found Hector whining, and tearing at the door to get to his mistress; and I called him away, but without effect; when, after a fierce battle, I dragged him out of the house to the shed, where I locked him in, after taking out a spade.

"The dog began to howl as soon as I had closed the door; but I knew that there was no one to hear him; so I went back to the house, closed and locked the door, and carried the spade to a spot I had determined on; after which I again returned to the house, hesitating at the door, however, half afraid to enter. Hector was quiet now, only scratching restlessly at the door of the shed.

"After waiting perhaps a quarter of an hour, passed in listening, I roused myself, and went in, drank furiously from the brandy I had in the closet; and then tearing open the inner door, I stooped, seized the body, which seemed like lead, and staggered with it out into the lane.



"I can't tell now how I got along, with the long low howl of the dog ringing in my ears, as he heard my heavy staggering footsteps. I seemed, as I went on, to have the strength of ten men, and the fears of a hundred. The bramble tearing at my coat was some one staying me; the bole of a tree, some one watching over the hedge; every gust of wind bore cries of fancied pursuers; and, half-mad, I pressed on, reeling from side to side of the road, till I reached the gate which led to the path I had chosen; and after getting through, I was obliged to stay here and rest.

"Rest! What a word! Rest!—that which I was never to know again. I dared not place my dreadful burden upon the ground, but stood leaning on the gate for a few minutes, before I turned and pressed on along the narrow grass-grown path for a few yards, striking then into the great fir-wood, where the path was slippery with the fallen needles, and save here and there, where there was a tuft of green moss, all bare. Trees everywhere—tall straight fir-trees, like the pillars of a great temple, and close together, so that I had to thread my way carefully as I slowly climbed the rising ground, the darkness being at times so intense that I had to hold one hand stretched out in front, to prevent striking against some trunk.

"Up still, higher and higher, a long toilsome walk with so heavy a load, my feet slipping from under me as the ground sloped more—the pine-needles making the path at times seem like glass; while once I tripped over a pine-stump, and fell heavily. But I was now close to where I had laid my spade, for I knew the ground well; and leaving my burden where it had fallen, I hurried to the spot I had fixed upon—an open space where a few trees had been thinned out—and then, seizing my spade, I carefully scraped the needles into a heap, ready to spread over the ground again, and then began to dig.

"At times there was such a lull of the storm, and all was so still, that the strokes of the spade echoed back to me, and then directly after I would stop, shivering, as the wind seemed to shout and wail amongst the tree-tops, roaring and hissing, and making branches creak and groan as they ground together. It was horrible; for the one word Murder, Murder! seemed to ring in my ears as though ten thousand voices shouted it; but I toiled on, digging furiously, throwing out spadeful after spadeful of earth, till I stood knee-deep in the black earth, making the heap at my side higher and higher.

"How the wind thundered in those fir-tops, and what a strange, ghastly gloom there seemed around! Now it would grow pitchy black, and the rain would come hissing and pattering down; then there would be a pale light steal through the tall trunks of the trees, so that I could see for some little distance round. At one of these times I turned cold, the sweat stood in a chilly dew upon my forehead, my hair was wet, and I dropped the spade, for there, in the strange gloom, was something white, staring horribly at me; and then I saw it apparently steal away, and melt into the darkness amongst the trees.

"As soon as I could sufficiently recover myself, I seized the spade again, and dug on to deepen the rough hole I was making, when again my blood seemed to freeze as I saw the same white figure indistinctly in the dim distance, before

I made out that it was *Hector*, seated now, as I could tell, where I had left the body, and howling most dismally.

"Relieved of my fears, I hurled a piece of earth at the dog, when he disappeared once more; and after a few more strokes of the spade, while trying the blade too strongly against a pine-root, the handle snapped in two.

"There was nothing else for it; so, tearing off, I ran back to fetch another, and found, as I expected, that the dog had broken the shed window, and leaped out; while upon once more reaching the pine-wood, I stopped short, for there came a dreadful cry from its depths—a horrible, long-drawn, echoing cry, which was repeated twice before I knew it to be *Hector*, whom I found sitting by the body.

"Could I have reached him, I should have killed him with the spade I carried; but my approach drove him away, for he knew me, and would not come near, though I tried hard to get him within reach, calling him again and again.

"It all seems like a dream, a horrible nightmare, that night: the strange whisperings amongst the trees; the voices; the shouts, wails, shrieks, and cries; the rushing noises; the echoing sound of my spade; and the occasional lulls, when all was as still as death. But I deepened the hole, dragged in the body, covered it level with the surrounding soil, beat it down frantically, to hide my crime from the sight of men, and then laboriously scattered about the spare earth, before I again spread the pine-needles over the spot.

"Day was faintly beginning to break before I had finished, for from time to time I had to leave my task to drive away the dog, who came first on one side, and then upon the other, to watch me, so that I felt afraid of him, lest he should betray me by coming back as soon as I was gone, and tearing up the earth until he had laid bare my dreadful secret.

"And now that all was hidden from sight, I turned to go, when, shivering with fear, I remembered that I had not got the broken spade-handle, and felt that it must be covered up in the grave, ready to tell its own tale of the murder, and who was buried there, for my name was branded on it in full. But, found or not, I could not—I dared not attempt to dig it out then; but calling to the restless, watching dog, I strode through the wood, and back to the shed, where I hung up the spade, and found, to my great relief, that the broken handle lay upon the floor, where I had cast it down with the blade.

"*Hector* had not followed me, but I dared not go back, though there was not the slightest likelihood of my meeting any one; so, cleansing my hands, and changing my clothes, I threw myself dressed upon the bed, and tried to sleep.

"Tried, but tried in vain, as I lay there listening to the glad song of the birds, and saw the bright sunshine reflected into my room, for the morning had broken as beautiful as the night had been rough. But sleep was not for me; and at last I sprang up, and unable to resist the inclination, walked into the fir-wood, when, upon nearing the spot, I turned cold once more with dread, on seeing *Hector* tearing away at the earth.

"But he ran as I approached; and after carefully looking round, I once more levelled the ground, trampled it, and scraping up a capful of pine-needles, sprinkled them over the place.

"Twice that day I returned to find my work to do over again; and the last time I brought my gun, and would have shot the dog, could I have got within reach; but as soon as I was in sight, he fled. This went on for weeks after: either *Hector* had scratched up the soil, or it had settled down a little, so that I was always in dread lest the spot should be discovered. More than once, I determined to dig the body up, and bury it elsewhere, but I dared not; and besides, I felt sure that the dog would either be watching me, or else would scent out the fresh place. I tried again and again to shoot him, but he never let me get within range, and the poisoned fragments of meat I laid about for him were never touched. How he lived, I never knew, but there he always was, wandering about the wood.

"I gave out that my wife had gone to visit friends at a distance, and I contrived that a black-edged letter should be sent to me, and then I left the town for a few days, to come back in deep mourning; and people were satisfied with my lame tale—such few as knew me—for mine was a solitary life in a wild part among the Surrey hills, and heaths, and pine-woods.

"That *Hector* seemed to lead a charmed life; and at last I came to the conclusion that his visits to the spot in the pine-wood were now paid only by night, for I seldom used to see him; and it seemed likely that getting to live after so wild a fashion, he followed the habits of his fellows, and slept the greater part of the day. But though I scarcely ever met with him, I constantly found proofs of his recent presence; and one night, when I went purposely to try and see him, as soon as I reached the gate I could hear his doleful howls, and I knew that he must be seated upon the grave. The night was perfectly still, and every howl came echoing back from the sandstone cliff where the martins built; and as I looked through the long alleys where the moon was casting hundreds of shadows, there was something so solemn-looking in the scene, that I had not the courage to proceed.

"I went on, though, at last with a strange trembling in every limb; but only to stop once more as a long echoing howl came ringing through the tall fir-trunks, when leaning my gun up against the one nearest to me, something seemed to draw me towards the old spot. But there was no fierce rage now against the dog, for a feeling of pity for him was making its way to my heart.

"Could the dog have known that? Who can say. But as I crept slowly nearer and nearer, till I could see him, there was no movement; and at last I was close to him where he lay—his muzzle resting upon his paws, save at times when he lifted himself a little, and gave out one of those long doleful howls—and the next minute, sobbing like a weak child, I was down upon my knees watering that poor unsanctified, but solemn grave with my tears.

"Repentance? If at that moment I could have changed places with the dead, I would have done it gladly; and then it was that, for the first time, something like prayers for forgiveness were muttered by my cracked white lips.

"I don't know how that night passed; but it seemed to me in one great awful stillness. *Hec.* howled no more; and he was quite forgotten, till all at once I started, for there was a touch upon my hands; when, as I looked up, day was break-

ing in a weird solemn way amongst the fir-trees; and, afraid of me no longer, *Hector* was licking my hands.

"Then I laid one hand upon his shaggy head, looking into his great honest truthful eyes; and as I said to him: '*Hec.*, old fellow, you won't betray me!' he raised his muzzle, and gave one low whimpering howl, and it seemed to me that we made friends, for with a last longing look at the grave, I stood up, and began to walk away, with the great dog following close to my heels.

"We seemed to understand one another then, and to feel that we had a great secret to keep. He did not shrink from me, even when I took up my gun all wet and rusted with the night-dew, but followed me home. We had become friends once more, and, as it were, made a solemn compact over the grave; but, you see, sir, he has borne the secret better than I. He'll want a master soon, sir, for you are right—your medicine is useless for my complaint. Time back I'd gladly have killed him; but now I think I should be easier if I knew he would have a good master when I'm gone; and I know no one more likely to make him one than you."

"He ceased speaking; and having several other patients to visit, I rose to take my leave, promising to call again. And the next time I did so, he was dead; while *Hector* followed me home."

"But that seemed rather an easy way of taking leave of a man who had just confessed to the perpetration of a horrible murder," said I.

"Well, yes, it does," said my friend; "but how would you have me end it?"

"Do you know," I said, laying down the pencil with which I had been taking voluminous notes, "this sounds not only very improbable, but uncommonly good language for a man who was only a poor bailiff or gamekeeper. Now, how much of the story is true?"

"Ask *Hector*," he said; "there he lies at your feet."

I looked at the great white dog, my friend's favourite, and then at the slight raising of my *vis-à-vis*'s eyebrows.

"Why, what was the good of humbugging, when I asked you to tell me how you obtained your dog?"

"Did you want it to be true, then?" he said with pretended surprise. "I invented it, every bit, myself."

"More shame for you!" I exclaimed, indignant at having had my sympathies aroused upon such false pretences. "I hold Truth above all things."

Still, you see, I have written the story.

#### SAILORS' SHANTIES AND SEA-SONGS.

I ONCE heard an old salt remark, that a good shanty was the best bar in the capstan; and he spoke truly. A good voice and a new and stirring chorus are worth an extra hand on board a merchantman, which, as a rule, is manned with the least possible number that the law allows, and often goes to sea short-handed, even according to the parsimonious calculations of its owners. The only way the heavier work can be done at all is by each man doing his utmost at the same moment. This is regulated by the shanty, the true song of the 'toilers of the sea.' It is not recreation; it

is an essential part of the work on shipboard. It is the shanty that mast-heads the topsail-yards, when making sail; it starts and weighs the anchor; it brings down the main-tack with a will; it loads and unloads cargo; it keeps the pumps going; in fact it does all the work where unison and strength are required. A good shanty is to the sailor what the pibroch is to the Highlander—invigorating, soul-stirring. At the capstan, on the topsail-halliards, in port and at sea, in calm and in storm, the ropes run smoother, the work is done quicker, when some twenty strong voices sing:

Haul the bowline, the fore and main top bowline;  
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul;  
Haul the bowline, the bully, bully bowline;  
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul.

I remember well, one dirty black night in the Channel, beating up for the Mersey against a stiff breeze, coming on deck near midnight, just as the ship was put about. When a ship is tacking, the tacks and sheets (ropes which confine the clews, or lower corners of the sails) are let run, in order that the yards may be swung round to meet the altered position of the ship. They then must be hauled taut again, and belayed, or secured, in order to keep the sails in their places, and to prevent them from shaking. When the ship's head comes up in the wind, the sail is for a moment or two edgewise to it, and then is the nice moment, as soon as the head-sails fairly fill, when the main-yard and the yard above it can be swung readily, and the tacks and sheets hauled in. If the ship is short-handed, or the crew slow at their work, and the sails get fairly filled on the new tack, it is a fatiguing piece of work enough to 'board' the tacks and sheets, as it is called. The crew are pulling at one end of the rope; but the gale is tugging at the other. The best plan in such cases is to put the helm down a little, and set the sails shaking again before they can be trimmed properly. It was just at such a time I came on deck as above mentioned. Being near eight bells, the watch on deck had not been over-smart, and the consequence was that our big main-course was flying out overhead with a might that shook the ship from stem to stern. The flaps of the mad canvas were like successive thumps of a giant's fist upon a big drum. The sheets were jerking at the belaying-pins, the blocks rattling in sharp snappings like castanets. You could hear the hiss and seething of the sea alongside, and see it flash by in sudden white patches of phosphorescent foam, while all overhead was black with the flying scud. Our second-mate, a Yankee, was stamping his feet with vexation, and without any regard for his *h's*, was storming away at the men. 'An'somely the weather main-brace there; an'somely, I tell you! Now, then, what the — are you all standing there for? 'Alf-a-dozen of you clap on to the main-sheet. Here, look alive! Down with 'im. 'Andy there! 'Anl 'im in.' But although he ran through all the most forcible expressions in his vocabulary, the sail wouldn't come. 'Give us a song, boys,' cried our old skipper, who had just come on deck. 'Pull with a will, boys; all together, boys.' Then a strong voice sang out:

Haul the bowline, the bowline, the bowline;  
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul;  
Haul the bowline; Polly is my darling;  
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul.

At the last word 'haul' in each couplet, every man threw his whole strength into the pull—all singing in chorus with a quick explosive sound. And so jump by jump the sheet was at last hauled taut. I daresay this description will be considered spun out by a seafaring man; but landsmen like to hear of the sea and its ways; and as more fresh-water sailors read this *Journal* than sea-water ones, I have told them of one shanty and its time and place.

The above is what we call a hauling shanty. Shanties are of two kinds—those sung at the capstan, and those sung when hauling on a rope: in the former, the metre is longer, and they are generally of a more pathetic nature. To those who have heard it, as the men run round the capstan, bringing up the anchor from the English mud, of a ship outward bound for a two years' trip, perhaps never to return, what can be more sad or touching, although sung with a good-will:

To the Liverpool docks we'll bid adieu;  
To Suke, and Sail, and Polly too;  
The anchor's weighed, the sail's unfurled;  
We are bound to cross the watery world.  
Hurrah! we're outward bound! Hurrah!  
we're outward bound!

More stirring is the following:

Steer, boys, steer, for California O;  
There's plenty of gold in the land, I'm told,  
On the banks of the Sacramento.

There is an air of romance about California, the Brazils, and Mexico, that has a peculiar charm for Jack; and he has made them the subject of many a favourite shanty, as *Rio Grande*, *Valparaiso*, *Round the Horn*, and *Santa Anna*. *Rio Grande* is perhaps the greatest favourite of this description of songs, but all the beauty lies in the mournful air:

To Rio Grande we're bound away, away to Rio;  
Then fare you well, my pretty young girls;  
We're bound to the Rio Grande.

The deeds of the bucaniers of old are held in great admiration by sailors—ballads descriptive of piracies, of murders by cruel captains, and of mutinies, with a sprinkling of sea-fights, dating from the last war with France and America.

There are many more capstan shanties, which I can only mention by name, such as *Oceanida*, *Johnny's Gone*, *The Black Ball Line*, and *Slapander-gosheka*. The last mentioned, with the incomprehensible title (repeated at the end of every line), is addressed to 'All you ladies now on land,' and may seem rather egotistical; it commences—

Have you got, lady, a daughter so fine,  
Slapander-gosheka,  
That is fit for a sailor that has crossed the line?  
Slapander-gosheka, &c.

I remember once hearing a good shanty on board a Glasgow boat; something like the following was the chorus:

Highland day, and off she goes,  
Off she goes with a flying fore-topsail;  
Highland day, and off she goes.

It was one of the most spirited things imaginable, when well sung; and when applied to the topsail halliards, brought the yards up in grand style.

We now come to the hauling shanties. First, there is the hand-over-hand song, in very quick

time; then the long-pull song. When there are a number of men—perhaps twenty or thirty—pulling on a rope, the reader will perceive that, to be effective, the pull must be made unanimously: this is secured by the shanty, the pull being made at some particular word in the chorus. For instance, in the following verse, each repetition of the word 'handy' is the signal for a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together:

Oh, shake her up, and away we'll go,  
So handy, my girls, so handy;  
Up aloft from down below,  
So handy, my girls, so handy.

For heavier work, or when hands are few, one of longer metre is used, such as *Land O, Boys, Land O; Haul away, my Jossey; O long, Storm, storm along, stormy.*

These are some of the working-songs of the sea. They are not chosen for their sense, but for their sound; they must contain good mouth-filling words, with the vowels in the right place, and the rhythmic ictus at proper distance for chest and hand to keep true time; and this is why the seaman beats the wind in a trial of strength. The wind may whistle, but it cannot sing; the sailor seldom whistles at sea, but always sings.

Besides the working-day songs, there are others for the forecastle and dog-watches, such as Dibdin's, Barry Cornwall's, Tom Campbell's, Allan Cunningham's, Gay's, Shield's, Stevens', and others.

There is no doubt that the inimitable sea-songs of Charles Dibdin have done much towards keeping up the *esprit de corps* of our British sailors; they are, in fact, an inheritance which the nation will never, it is to be hoped, undervalue. Whatever form naval warfare may hereafter assume, however the technicalities of the maritime profession may be altered, the spirit of the English seaman will be unchanged. He will be the same hearty, fearless, generous, and simple being that Dibdin describes him. He will love his country and his flag with the same ardour; reverence his ship in the same way, whether it is propelled by wind or steam; and adore his *Bonny Kate* or *Charming Nancy* in the same enthusiastic fashion. Not only, however, have these songs been popular with seamen, but they have obtained a deep hold on the national heart. There are few who are not familiar with some at least of Dibdin's songs, fewer who have not at least heard of those pathetic ballads, *Poor Tom Bowling*, *'Twas in the Good Ship*, or that famous ditty, *'Twas post-meridian half-past four*. How thoroughly wise, good, brave, and gentle are the sentiments expressed in the ballad of *Poor Jack*:

I heard our good chaplain palaver one day  
About souls, heaven, mercy, and such;  
And, my timbers! what lingo he'd coil and belay:  
Why, 'twas all one to me as High Dutch!  
But he said how a sparrow can't founder, d'ye see,  
Without orders that come down below;  
And many a fine thing, that proved clearly to me  
That Providence takes us in tow:  
For, says he, do you mind, let storms e'er so oft  
Take the topsails of sailors aback,  
There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft,  
To keep watch o'er the life of Poor Jack.

And yet the whole is so mixed up with frequent and quaint technical phrases and expressions, as to render it perfectly characteristic and inimitable.

The following is also sweet and tranquil, and a great favourite in the forecastle:

And on that night when all the crew  
The memory of their former lives,  
O'er flowing cans of flip, renew,  
And drink their sweethearts and their wives,  
I'll heave a sigh, and think on thee,  
And as the ship rolls through the sea,  
The burden of my song shall be:  
Blow high, blow low, let tempests tear  
The main-mast by the board,  
My heart, with thoughts of thee, my dear,  
And love well stored,  
Shall brave all danger, scorn all fear,  
The roaring wind, the raging sea,  
In hopes on shore  
To be once more  
Safe moored with thee!

Had Dibdin written merely to amuse, his reputation would have been great; but it stands the higher, because he is always on the side of virtue, humanity, constancy, love of country, and courage; these were always the subjects of his song, and the themes of his praise. Most of Dibdin's songs have become permanent favourites both in the navy and the merchant-service, and there is not the least doubt but their influence is still strongly felt, and is one of the chief means of supplying her Majesty's navy with seamen. When a ship leaves any British port, for the first week we hear bits and scraps of songs and chorus, such as *Champagne Charley*, *Tommy Dodd*, and such fast shore-songs, that the men pick up at the singing-rooms in port; but they soon die out at sea, and give way to the old favourites, such as, *The Anchor's Weighed*, *Isle of Beauty*, *Heaving of the Lead*, *Minute-gun at Sea*, *Slave-chase*, *Death of Nelson*, *Sailor's Grave*, *The Storm*, *Black-eyed Susan*, *White Squall*, *The Sea*, *The Pilot*, and many other good old songs of this class, that have braved the storm by sea and land for the last half-century.

## A LIMITED HORIZON.

### IN FIFTEEN CHAPTERS.

#### CHAPTER XI.—A 'LAST APPEAL.'

THE Cleathers were going away again, so Gertrude came in to tell the Heskeths one bright May morning. It was just a year since the Heskeths had come to Grimswold, and she could not help noticing that it had told upon Lalagé, the girl looked so white, and her former peculiarly bright expression had given way to a yearning unsatisfied, serious look, which was quite pathetic. Those dreary months had left their mark upon the woman who was not wise enough to find occupation for herself. Gertrude was quite touched by it, and by the blank look which came into Lalagé's face when she had told her news. Belle noticed the look too.

'I wish you would leave little Dinner Bell under our charge,' she said.

'O do, Gertrude,' said Lalagé, with a grateful look at her sister. 'I should like it so much; and we really would take great care of her.'

'You are very kind,' said Gertrude slowly, thinking over what was best for the child, 'and it would be a great help to me. Her papa will miss her terribly at first, but I think I may at



once accept your offer. You won't find her troublesome, she is getting such a helpful little woman !'

'I am so grateful to you,' said Lalagé, as she bade her friend good-bye.

So the following week, little Isabel Cleather took up her abode in the Hill House. She came without any attendant, being now four years old, and 'big enough to put herself to bed,' as she boasted to Lalagé, though she was never allowed to make good her words.

This little girl's advent was a great boon to Lalagé ; she required such constant attention, and was able to walk so far on those sturdy little legs, that she in no way hampered her guardian's movements. The bright summer days, too, cheered the girl's heart, though she no longer found the wonderful beauty which daily unfolded itself before her eyes sufficient for her. She regained somewhat of her old gaiety, and no longer felt the oppressive awe of the overhanging hills.

The big curate noticed the change : she seemed happier than she had been all the winter ; and he, who was impervious to all atmospheric influences, could make nothing of the alteration ; he could not account for it by the presence of a little child, and the coming of brighter weather. 'She is getting to like me less,' he thought with a superhuman sigh, and resolved to make a gigantic effort to recover his lost ground.

He did not exactly forget the promise that bound him, but he put it aside for a while ; at least, he said to himself that if a sudden impulse came upon him, why, a man could not always resist impulse. So he went out one day to seek an impulse. He soon found it, in the shape of Lalagé and her charge wandering slowly down to the 'Bottom,' as the poor people called it—the green valley lying at the foot of the hill on which Grimswood was built ; they were in a soft, green-lined lane, Dinner Bell gathering flowers and weeds alike as she dawdled along, babbling incessantly, as did the brook at their side. A few of the curate's big strides soon brought him up to them.

'You mustn't walk so fast,' said Lalagé with a smile, when she found he intended accompanying them : 'you forget that this young lady is not so richly endowed with walking materials as you are.'

'Will you have a ride, Dinner Bell ?' he said to the child, who had recklessly flung her arms round his legs in a close embrace.

An eager assent was given, and she was soon perched on his shoulder in great content. But after a while she got tired, and tried to slide down ; so the curate released her. She strayed apart from them, either in front or behind, talking to herself with great satisfaction, whilst the other two conversed more soberly, and walked more discreetly. All at once, the curate said abruptly : 'I am going home in a very few days, Miss Lalagé.'

'Are you ?' she said, with no tremor in her voice, no quickening at her heart. 'You did not take your holiday till much later last year.'

'No ; I could not bear to leave the place,' he said ; 'and, for the matter of that, I hate the idea now, and wish I could put it off as I did then, and make such a short business of it ; but I shall be away fully a month this year.'

'That is a long time,' said Lalagé, looking behind to see if Dinner Bell were safe.

'A very long time it seems to me,' he said with a sigh ; 'but my mother and sister want me. They fancy I am unhappy.'

'Do they live far off ?' she asked.

'Down in Devonshire,' said the curate ; but he was determined not to be baffled in this way. 'They think I am unhappy,' he went on, 'and I don't know that they are so far wrong. I am very, very unhappy.'

'I am really very sorry to hear it,' said Lalagé coldly.

'You are not sorry—you do not care,' said the curate, irritated out of his usual placidity ; 'and you are the cause of it all.'

Then he broke out again—this unwise man—saying in the fair summer light all he had said in the gloomy autumn darkness, and not saying it so well either. She was perfectly silent, but that silence was very different from the soft speechlessness that had been hers on that former occasion. The stern stillness of repression was on her face now ; but to him, who was no quick reader of human tablets, it was all the same. She had not been angry then, she would not be angry now ; and so he went on with his foolish outpouring. She heard him out to the very end, till he had nothing left to say, till he stood speechless, though unabashed, before her, and then she turned and looked him full in the face.

'You have broken your word,' she said, bitter anger and scorn flashing so plainly into her face, that even he could read the characters ; 'you have spoken as you promised never again to speak.'

His foolish eyes fell to the ground, as those accusing ones met them.

'I could not help it,' he said weakly ; 'it is for the last time. I am going away ; and I am very wretched.'

'And does your wretchedness destroy your honour, your truth, your manhood ?' she said with a blaze of passion. 'You have thrown all away to-day.'

'I do not care,' he said, with the recklessness of a weak man. 'If only I can get you to like me, as I believe in time I could, I would risk anything, everything !'

'Hush !' she said, repressing her anger with a great effort ; but her caution came too late.

Little Dinner Bell—forgotten by both in the heat of the discussion—ran forward, fully equal to the occasion, and thoroughly appreciating it. She caught hold of the clerical trousers of her pastor, and thus armed, addressed Lalagé.

'Will you mally him ?' said the child, looking up. 'Do mally him. Nurse says you must—always walking, always talking, must mally at last, nurse says.'

Lalagé turned to the poor curate. 'You see what you have brought upon me,' she said.

He lifted the child in his arms. 'But you are to be my little wife, Dinner Bell.'

'And Laladée your big wife,' persisted the child ; 'and live in one house, with my Noah's Ark, and hens and chickens outside the door. Only—with serious, wide-opened eyes—'you must not go swarring, swarring all over the house, like poor pupa, when his head is bad.'

'No ; I don't do that,' said the difficultly-placed man.

'Come, Dinner Bell,' said Lalagé, 'you and I must go home ; and Mr Mitchell has to walk ever

so much farther : run and pick that big blue flower for me.'

The child struggled out of the curate's arms, and ran off; then Lalagé turned to him. 'I have already told you my opinion of your conduct to-day,' she said stiffly; 'I have only to add that, if it is once more repeated, I shall complain to my father. The "walking and talking," as nurse says, are all at an end.' She paused, but no answer came. Looking up in his face with proud, indignant questioning, she found there no expression of anger or resentment, only bitter, bitter pain.

'I am really sorry to speak to you in this way,' she went on, a little softened; 'but what can I do? No words can be too harsh for what you have done to-day, no condemnation too strong.'

'Forgive me,' he said; and turning his back to the child, who was now some yards ahead, he put one big hand over his face: 'then there is no hope for me!'

'No hope,' she said firmly; but she could not bear the sight of his sorrow, for, though feeling he was very weak, she was too nearly concerned to perceive how utterly unworthy a grief it was, suffering without strength.

In that moment, standing there by his side, a temptation arose. Something said to her that it would be only fair to tell him that she too had been wounded in the battle which seemed to be unfavourable to him alone. Such a confession would have been so utterly repugnant, so unspeakably painful, that the chivalry of youthful self-abnegation declared loudly in its favour; but feminine instinct would not, could not suffer it, so she turned and walked away. No; that unworthy love of hers—never felt to be more unworthy than now—should be locked up in her heart all her life. She chafed over it in silence; it galled her spirit and fretted her pride; but still she acknowledged the shadowless existence which had come to her, as she fancied, so joylessly.

She turned away and left him, taking the child with her, never again to meet him till the current of both foolish hearts had been utterly changed; till he had grown content and satisfied with his fate; till she had cast from her the error under which she was now labouring; till new scenes, and wishes, and hopes had come between them.

But that future comfort was far from her now; and as she walked up the hill-side, with the hot sun behind her, she felt her old wretchedness come back to her. Albeit he had been so wrong—she was so sorry for him—poor pitiful Lalagé; and all the sorrow, all the pity, were only, as she scornfully told herself, fresh proofs that she was 'what people called in love.' She grew angry at the iterated thought, and wondered what the curate had meant by words which were still keeping up an indignant echo in her heart.

'If only I could get you to like me, as I believe in time I could,' he had said.

What had he meant? Could he guess the secret she had so jealously guarded? Anger alone, to the exclusion of every softer feeling, filled her mind at the bare idea.

But no; she would not let this torment her; he could not have meant it; he did not know what he had been saying; for surely no man, with ever so faint a hope on which to build, would have accepted the verdict she had pronounced. In her secrecy at least she was safe.

#### CHAPTER XII.—A CHANGE IN THE MINISTRY.

The big curate's heart was very heavy. There was 'no hope' for him, Lalagé had said; and she had reproached him with being dishonourable, with having broken his word, and he could not help feeling that there was truth in her words. He was not stung by them—he was not a man capable of being stung—but he thought them over slowly, and came to the conclusion that she was not altogether wrong.

He was very sorry; he could not bear to do wrong; and yet all his life, in almost all his foolish, susceptible 'affairs,' he had been doing wrong—sinning in the blindest ignorance, but still sinning. That his easily involved and variable affections might be the cause of suffering to any of the goddesses whom he by turns worshipped, never entered his short-sighted and really humble mind.

For he was humble, with the provoking humility which thinks its possessor free to act as he chooses, being of so little consequence in the world, and which often does more harm than the most offensive conceit.

Most of the curate's goddesses had indeed escaped scathless as he himself, quickly learning the real value of his changeable love. Only in one case had the iron entered the soul of a woman, and branded her heart with life-long scars. Down in his native Devonshire, five years before meeting Lalagé, he had been engaged to a certain wealthy brewer's daughter, whose charms had found him an easy victim. Her father, not so sure as herself of the stability of the ardent, unwise young man, had determined to test it by an eighteen months' engagement. Alas, the big curate had not proved equal to the trial. Before one half of the time was over, his *fiancée* heard from good authority that he was sighing at the feet of another. She wrote to him accordingly, breaking off the engagement very gently, but firmly. There was not one word of upbraiding or of her own pain in the letter; she was too deeply wounded for that. The curate accepted his doom meekly, feeling rather that he had been injured than that she had been. He answered her note, humbly acquiescing in her decision, but asking no questions as to what had induced it; and with that letter the matter had come to a conclusion with him.

But not with her. Year after year she brooded over that first love of hers, and slowly grew to the knowledge that it would likewise be her last. And his letter had been a mystery to her: he had attempted no justification—had in no way palliated his conduct. Perhaps, after all, it had only been a mistake, and she had sacrificed the happiness of her life to a rumour. Ah, if only she could see him again, thought poor Mary Hops, it might all come right even yet. But he had gone up into Gloucestershire, and been buried in the wilds of Grimswood; and during his brief visits home, fate had always found the brewer's daughter absent from the scene of action.

Then her father had died, and left her, a wealthy heiress, without kith or kin in the world, except a cross old aunt at a distance, with whom she was to take up her residence. She must leave the town where Tom Mitchell's mother and sister lived, and this was a great grief to her, for another Mary, Mary Mitchell, had taken the keenest

interest in the affair, and knew all her friend's mind on the subject. If only she could bring 'It' all right again, she felt she should not have lived in vain.

She kept her brother steadily before the mind of the poor, lonely girl who loved him; said fifty times a day: 'I daresay it was all a mistake'; talked much of the depression ('unhappiness,' she called it) of which Tom was complaining, and finally begged the brewer's daughter to stay with them a month or so just at the time that the curate was expected.

Such was the combination of circumstances into which the unwise man walked one day in the June of this same year. He had written to say by what train he would arrive, but Mary Mitchell had kept this knowledge from her friend, and so managed that the brewer's daughter should be alone in the tiny drawing-room when the curate arrived, his sister and mother—who was in the plot—being out. So the unsuspecting man with his burdened heart turned the handle of the well-known door, and went in his ignorance to meet his fate.

But once inside the room, he paused. Sitting in the low window-seat was a woman in deep mourning, with a good, sensible face, which was not without a charm of its own, and soft, smooth, brown hair. She rose with a bright blush as he entered, and went forward to meet him; she thought it was diffidence that kept him hesitating at the door, whilst in reality he was vainly striving to remember who she was.

'Tom,' she said, holding out her hand, 'the past is all forgiven.'

And then he knew her, and said: 'Thank you,' not quite knowing what she had to forgive, and stupidly put his large carpet-bag on the small table, and sat down by it.

She sat down too, and then there was an awkward pause. Presently she said timidly: 'You have been very unhappy, I know.'

'Very unhappy,' he said; and then the thought of it all came over him, and putting his arm on the table, he rested his hidden face on it. Speak out he must, just to relieve that foolish heart.

'I have been very unhappy,' he repeated slowly; 'and what is worse, I am afraid I have been very wrong.'

She got up and stood by him. Tears broke her voice as she said: 'Not wrong: you shall never say that to me or any one else. Perhaps you have been a little foolish and mistaken in your feelings, but not wrong; no, not wrong. And you have come back now, and all the past is forgiven, as I told you before.'

Slowly, into his unwise heart, the full meaning of her words penetrated: the silence that followed helped to reveal it to him ere his attention was claimed again. He was thinking of Lalagé; she was speaking of herself. There was no mistaking the tender grandeur of that forgiveness. She, then, had suffered from that former episode in their two lives, which had seemed to him but a slight and passing thing; she had suffered, and through him. The thought pierced his soft, foolish heart, and he felt glad that his face was hidden, for he was ashamed as well as sorry. But then, why had she written that renouncing letter? He would have given years of his life to

know, for then he could better have understood his situation; but instinct, dull as it was with him, told him it was not the time to ask. He still kept his face hidden and was silent.

In that silence, seeming to her so full of pathetic repentance, she went closer, and put her hand on his shoulder. Then he looked up.

'You are very good to me,' he said.

'I mean to be only good to you,' she answered.

'And you have suffered too,' he said, taking the hand which had dropped to her side.

'Suffered!' she said with a shiver. 'O Tom, it was terrible; but it is all over now. And what does it matter? I have you back again.'

What could he answer to this—the man who bore Lalagé Hesketh's image in his heart? Happily, reply was spared him, for the door opened, and Mary Mitchell, who had been sobbing on the staircase for the last five minutes, and could restrain herself no longer, burst in.

'Oh,' she cried, 'it is all right, and you two are together again, and I'm sure I'm as happy'—with a sob—'as I ever was in all my life.'

If she had known, as she afterwards did, that the train had been very late, and the interview consequently a very short one, she would probably have allowed them more time, and possibly would have been too late to prevent the curate's committing himself. The one thing for which she blamed herself in the day's proceedings was the one thing which probably saved the whole affair in which she was so deeply interested; but, as she herself said: 'What did it matter, now it was all right?'

'It was all right to every one but the poor dazed curate, who stumbled up-stairs in his awkward fashion, and wondered how it had all come about, and what was to become of him; for dearer than any former love was the image of that bright, sweet Lalagé, the golden glint of whose sunny hair dazzled his eyes as he looked into the future, and found he could not yet put any woman in her place. But still, whilst getting ready for the early dinner, he could not but acknowledge to himself that time had before this done much for him.

But how had all this come about? Not daring to ask, he yet longed to know; and gradually the desired knowledge came to him. He gleaned it from the loud boasts of the sister who had brought 'It' all right, and who told the story fifty times a day; he gathered it from the fond reproaches of his mother to a son who, she told him, had been too shy to come forward long before, as he should have done; last, and most surely of all, he learned it from the calm acquiescence in a past, long sorrow, with which the woman, with regard to whom he stood in so strange a position, met his awkward questions. It was a revelation to him, but one which admitted of no doubt, he quite felt that, when, three weeks later, Mary shewed him an entry in her diary, made the day after his return home: 'Happy once more.'

'My poor Mary,' said the curate.

Yes, it came to that; the days and weeks did so much for him that he could call her his 'poor Mary.' Still, Lalagé's image kept floating before his dazzled eyes; but she was absent, and Mary present; and his heart was very weak, and Mary's love very strong.

And this wisdom the unwise curate had—never to let her find out how matters had really stood when he turned the bolt of the drawing-room door

on that eventful day ; he locked up the secret in a heart which happily grew more torpid as the years went on. He alone knew that his every thought was not loyal ; that a fatal, fair face—a memory of 'ancient grace'—would at times come between him and his present, and bewilder him with unforgotten loveliness, and he had the grace to be ashamed of such visions ; for, after all, he was only a weak man : perhaps the worst that can be said of him is the moderate comment which Mr Froude passes upon Henry VIII., in some such words as these : 'In his relations with women he was singularly unfortunate ; it would have been well for him if he could have existed in a world where they were not.'

Yes, the days and weeks did much for him ; Mary was always with him, soothing and calming his heart, shedding a sanctifying influence over him, and accepting, with no possibility of doubt, the relation between them which so bewildered him. Was he engaged to her, or was he not ? Or was she engaged to him, without his being engaged to her ? Formally engaged to her he could not be ; it was impossible to take so decided a step without informing Lalagé of his intentions, and yet he was daily treated as only an engaged man is treated. Then he ought to be engaged. But how was it to be done, how could it be managed ? In what manner, in what fashion, with what words could he inform his late—and yet not his late—goddess that she was dethroned, and another reigning in her stead ? So short a time had elapsed since he had stood before Lalagé, pleading earnestly for her regard, that it was almost impossible to tell her without insult that that regard would be no longer acceptable. How should he do it ? Was ever poor man so plagued and worried before ? thought the big curate.

And yet the thing must be done ; the letter must be written ; for the days were slipping by, and each one found him more deeply involved, and Mary kinder and dearer. He used to sit up at night, beginning countless epistles, only destined to be burned, and left in thin, gray, unsubstantial piles on his fireless hearth ; using long pieces of candle, which made his sister shake her head over the diminished columns, and say : 'See what comes of being in love !' with an oracular nod. As indeed it did, though she knew nothing of the discordant duet which was being performed in the curate's susceptible heart.

Not till a month had passed—not till he had obtained a fortnight's extension of leave—was that unhappy letter posted. When it was fairly off, his spirits rose, and he quite entered into the enjoyment of the hour. After all, it was not his fault ; circumstances had been too powerful for him ; a groove had been set for him, and who was he that he should refuse to run in it ? Mary was good and sweet beyond expression ; no difficulties of position or rank came between him and her ; and this union would make both his mother and sister very happy. 'Kismet,' said the curate, and devoted himself to his new, yet old love, and was very moderately happy.

Then came the answer to his letter, and woke up the old feelings, for Lalagé was generous and delicate, and could not help shewing it even in that short stern note. 'Fair, and good, and sweet,' sighed the curate, 'but not for me ;' and a sea of regret rushed through his heart, sweeping away the

landmarks which Mary had so carefully piled. However, she was there to build up new ones with patient unconsciousness, so he addressed himself manfully to the present, and found it very soothing.

He had begged that Lalagé's letter might be addressed to the post-office, so no one but himself knew of its arrival ; he had felt that anything touched by or belonging to her must bear some distinctive mark, and in this he was not so far wrong ; a violet monogram and scented paper were certainly unusual at the widow's cottage, and might have provoked comment.

At last, his time was up, and he left his mother's house a re-engaged man.

He was whirled back into Gloucestershire, and none but he knew of the trepidation in that foolish heart. 'How shall I meet her ?' he constantly asked himself, and the 'her' was not his betrothed.

### MY SECRET.

BEND your heads, ye tall trees, above ;  
Listen, O listen, sweet flowers, below—  
He's mine for ever—my love, my love !  
My secret of secrets now you know.  
Gaily rustle the leaves as I pass ;  
All the blossoms smile in the grass ;  
Carol the birds upon every bough :  
'Happy,' they all say—'happy art thou.'

Dear little birds, throughout all the land,  
Ye will tell this secret of mine ere long,  
But none will be able to understand ;  
They will only say : 'How sweet is the song !'  
And the flowers will whisper my tale to-night  
To the fairies that come in the clear moonlight ;  
And the leaves will murmur it soft and low  
To the summer-winds that among them go.

O birds, will you leave us when days are cold ?  
Will the flowers wither, the leaves grow sere ?  
Little brook, will the frost your wavelets hold ?  
Will the earth be sad, as it was last year ?  
To the world shall winter come by-and-by ;  
But when leaves shall fall, and when flowers die,  
And the woodland singers are over the sea,  
This summer-time still in my heart shall be.

Early this month will be issued a Christmas Extra Double Number of *Chambers's Journal*, entitled

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Also sold by all Booksellers.